

Heaven-sent

Warley CC - Paradise Lane

Today, I would say 230 is a par score on our wicket.
[Club official, Ian Buckley]

Paradise Lane. Without doubt, the ideal name for a cricket ground.

Warley, who left the Amateur League for the Halifax League in 1953, have played at Paradise Lane continuously since 1933, and also before that as well. The club folded in 1919, only to re-emerge 14 years later. In the 1920s, when the club was temporarily defunct, cricket was still played at the ground. One old photograph from the decade shows local cricketers mixing with umpires, players of knur and spell (an early form of golf especially popular in the Halifax area), and women of the village. Thus, it would be accurate to say that cricket at Paradise Lane is almost a century old.



1958

Local history expert David Brearley says: 'Warley is now recognised as one of Calderdale's most attractive and unspoilt villages...It retains a

semi-rural atmosphere and a charm which fortunately the residents will fight to keep.' In years gone by, Warley was a township bordered to the west by Midgley and to the east by Ovenden. Today, many local folk still talk of Warley Town.

Warley - or Werlafeslei, as it was known in the Domesday Book of 1086 - made its name as a farming area. Today, it is famous for the Maypole Inn, the real hub of village life.

Warley's tree-lined ground is not a million miles away from that of Sowerby Bridge Church Institute CC. Halifax Vandals rugby team is also based only a few hundred yards away. As to the ground itself, it is immediately surrounded by houses, cottages, a church, a school and a children's playground, and as such, has a nice enclosed feel to it. The trees on the boundary's edge add to the pleasant ambience, and one or two actually over-hang the playing surface. No-one could say that the outfield is totally flat, but over the years the club has made strenuous attempts to level out the lumps that, on occasions, have diverted balls skywards. The ground is rented on an annual basis from a local family.

Paradise Lane has seen its fair share of improvements. The original pavilion had a new floor and new roof put in, and the current construction was built by club member Howard Smith in the 1960s. Club stalwart Ian Buckley explains: 'Howard built the pavilion at home - literally. Other members helped him put it up and concrete the base, and overall it cost us £2,500. It would have cost double the amount if we had not done it ourselves.' The old scoreboard was also replaced, and a new tearoom is next on the agenda.

Buckley, who as a boy during the war acted as club scorer, played for Warley for several decades, and has been a Committee member since 1957. He has vivid memories: 'In the early days we had a problem with the grass. It was too long. Sometimes you could run five for a gentle push! In the end we had to move some sheep into graze during the week - just so it would be short enough for the weekend. Nowadays we have got a good cricket wicket, but it has been a long process. Decades ago, balls would fly off a length, but we added some clay to the wicket and it began to be a very good track to bat on.'

The pitch was obviously kind to Warley in the 1990s. They won the Parish Cup in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 2001, and the First Division Championship in 1998.

Today, the large white wall at the school end acts as a more than adequate sight screen. Around the perimeter of the ground there is a range of modern grey seating and also a number of old fashioned brown benches, some dedicated in a most touching manner. For example: IN

MEMORY OF CLIFFORD YATES 1915-1993 - A LONG INNINGS
SADLY ENDED and DAVID CARTWRIGHT 1941-1999 - MATCH
ENDED 29-4-1999. INNINGS ALWAYS REMEMBERED.

Paradise Lane was obviously good to these two gents.

Extract from P.Davies, *Home Soil* (2003)